NUMB. VIII.

THE PLAIN DEALER.

To be Continued *every* MONDAY *and* FRIDAY.

——— *Nos duo turba ſumus.* OVID.

FRIDAY, APRIL 17. 1724.

THERE is a *Livelinſs*, and Race of *Spirit*, which we commonly call *Wit*; but it is the *Effect* of *Natural Accident*; and depends, like a *Machine*, upon *Order* and *Parts*. It is only the *Reſult* of a *Mixture* of *different Humours*: and of Animal Spirits, *finer* and more *delicately* agitated, than ordinary; which *imprint* in their Paſſage, a *quick* and *lively* Senſe of Images; and animate by that Impreſſion, the *Viſage*, *Voice* and *Deportment*.

IT is merely by this Quickneſs, and Heat of their *Imagination*, that witty Men ſurprize us. A ſmart and ſprightly *Rhetorick*! A humorous Turn of *Phraſe*! A frank Vivacity of *Mien*! with a *modiſh Affectation* of peculiar *Looks*, and *Geſture*, make the *Merit* of their *Character*. But theſe Men want, for the moſt Part, both *Strength* of *Mind*, and *Penetration*. Their *Imaginations* are *thin*, and *delicate*; and play *lightly* on the *Skirts* of *Objects*: But they are too *weak* for ſolid *Reaſoning*; and, in any Thing, *abſtracted*, and *above* the *Pitch* of the *Senſes*, they are miſerably *Impotent*, and grow preſently *weary*.

THEY are the LADIES *Favourites*, however; by a Kind of *Sympathy*, or *Reſemblance*: For, *Women*, being naturally of feeble *Conſtitutions*, have their Brains of ſoft Conſiſtence; with *Fibres fine*, and *ſlender*; *Apt* and *Eaſy* to be mov'd, by the *weakeſt* Agitations. They are *ſubject* therefore, to their *Senſes*; and wanting *Force*, to ſtrike *deeper*, ſet up for Judges of *Modes*, and *Faſhions*; and reliſh nothing, but what contributes to their *Pleaſure*, or their *Ornament*. They have fix'd the Standard of *Wit*, by certain *Rules*, of this *Tendency*; and find nothing ſo *difficult*, as to believe, A Man can *want* it, who has ſuch *Charms* for their Entertainment.

Ned Volatile, a Member of our ASSEMBLY at the *Widow's*, is a *Foreman* of this *Species*. With a great Extent of *Good Nature*, he appears *Void* of *Any* His Facility to *jeſt* and *rally*, tranſports him, beyond *Decency*, to *illuſtrate* Objects, or *debaſe* 'em; and, without Regard to *Ceremony*, *Merit* or *Condition*, he *contracts* Things, or *magnifies* them, when they fall in his Way; 'till he has *adapted* them to his *Talent*, of preſenting every Thing *ridiculouſly*.

WE have the very *Reverſe* of this *Character*, in the *frank-hearted Major Stedfaſt*: a Brave, and Able Officer, the *Reward* of whoſe *Merit* has been *Oppreſſion* and *Injuſtice*! yet, ſo *firm* is the manly *Generoſity* of his Temper, that, at one and the ſame Time, he *vindicates* his Character with the Boldneſs of an *injur'd* Soldier; and offers Arguments, in Excuſe for the *Raſhneſs* of his Ruiner! Imputing to *Credulity*, and the *Malice* of Miſrepreſenters, what his Friends, All, conſider as an Act of *Violence* and *Barbarity*. There is no *Subject*, which he, oftner, or with more *Pleaſure*, enlarges on, than the *Great*, and *Noble Qualities*, of the Man who has *undone* him! Nay, he talks, even of his *Juſtice*, with as much *Warmth* and *Seriouſneſs*, as if he had, himſelf, been oblig'd by it.

THE *Major* and *Ned Volatile*, are the *North* and *South Poles* of our ASSEMBLY. *Ned ſpeaks*, and the *Major thinks*. The Firſt is always *pleas'd*, but the Other always *pleaſes*. There is a *Humanity* in the *Major's Air*, that never fails to mark him out, as the Common Friend of the Company: And a kind of *Majeſtick Tenderneſs* in his Behaviour, gives him the *Authority* of their *Father*. He corrects, and approves, with Openneſs; and is, at once, *ſevere* and *amiable*! There is a ſolemn *Force* and *Weight*, in the Manner of his *ſpeaking*, which ſeems to borrow it's *Equality*, from the *Steddineſs* of his *Principles*. He eſteems, without *Tranſport*; and condemns, without *Anger*. What is *Fancy* in *Ned Volatile*, is *Reaſon* in the *Major*. The One has a *Judgment*, that is *Solid* and *Plain*: The Other an *Imagination*, that is Sparkling and Wanton.

IT is a very frequent, and agreeable Entertainment, which ariſes to the ASSEMBLY out of the natural *Oppoſition*, of theſe two *Characters*; who yet preſerve a *Decorum*, by Effect of the Regard each has for the other. The *Major* loves *Ned*'s Chearfulneſs; but thinks him *trifling* and *impertinent*: And *Ned Volatile* hears, with Reverence, the Wiſdom of the *Major*; but would *like* him a great deal better, if he would be *merrier* and more *noiſy*.

WE had lately the Pleaſure of hearing, in a full Meeting, ſome of the neweſt *Opera Songs*, by a skilful *Italian* LADY, who *has been* famous, on our *Theatres*; and is equally remarkable for the *Sweetneſs* of her *Voice*, and the *Strength* of her *Features*! ſhe is an Acquaintance of the *Widow*, who asked us, aſſoon as ſhe was gone, our Opinion of this Perſon, to whom, we all knew her *Partial*. *Ned Volatile* prevented *any* Anſwer but his *Own*; and deſir'd, He might have Liberty to give it, *under his Hand*, in an immediate Flight of Poetry. He had Pen and Ink brought him; and every Body was grown *Impatient* for the Product of his *Muſe*, when he preſented it, in the following VERSES.

Now

NOW *Shame purſue my* medling Sight;
Wou'd, *I had been* All Ear, *to Night!*
Sweet is her Voice, *as Flow'rs in* June;
But ne'er was Face *ſo out of* Tune.
Lower *than* Gammut *are her* Eyes:
Her Noſe *does above* Ela *riſe!*
Were I to chuſe my ſelf a Dear,
Not by my Eye, *but by my* Ear,
Here *wou'd I fix — cou'd I but* woo
The Sound, *without the* Subſtance *too.*
Some Women are All *Tongue — and oh!*
What Joy 'twou'd be, were This *but* ſo!
Harmonious Gods! *to eaſe my Mind,*
Or ſtrike Her Dumb, *or make Me* Blind.

NO ſooner had *Ned Volatile* repeated his VERSES but a General Applauſe, of *Laughter*, was return'd him by the Company. All but the *Widow*, the *Major* and *My-ſelf*, were extravagantly tranſported with the *Humour* and the *Satyr*: And *Ned* was triumphantly *expanding* his *Poetry*, with an Air of *Levity*, and *Satisfaction*; when the *Major*, to prevent a ſecond Reading, of what he ſaw was *diſtaſteful* to ſome Part of the ASSEMBLY, began for to ſpeak in this Manner.

'THE Company muſt acknowledge, they are 'oblig'd to Mr. *Volatile*, for the Pains he is at, to 'please them: But, if he were as *inclinable* to *Reaſon*, 'as he is to *entertain*, No Body could convince us 'ſooner, that the *fineſt Ridicule* is to be conſidered but 'as *Cruelty*, where it borrows its Subject from Men's 'Natural *Defects*, or their *Miſeries*. I know very 'well, that whatever ſavours of *Inſtruction* is offenſive 'in *Converſation*; and that nothing is more *inſupport-*'*able*, than a *Liberty* People take, of Preſcribing *Rules* 'to all the World. We preſently wiſh to fly the So-'ciety of thoſe who *dogmatize*: For the Mind of Man 'is Generous, and *reſiſts* Truth, or *receives* it, as it's 'Approaches are *Rude* or *Gentle*. But then, there is 'an equal Inconvenience, in the *Contrary Extream*: 'And, if we wou'd enjoy Converſation, with a De-'licacy of *Wit*, we ſhould have Liberty to *bound* it, 'by the Interpoſition of our *Judgment*.

'THE *Harmony* of this Lady, who has ſo agreeably 'entertain'd us, is a *Beauty*, that might weigh againſt 'the Abſence of other Charms, more frequent and per-'haps leſs valuable! 'Tis the Motherly Indulgence of '*Nature*, to rob us of *no* Benefit, without beſtowing 'on us ſome other, in a double Proportion. How 'ſeldom do we find *all* Accompliſhments united in the '*ſame* Perſon? *Some* are *Happy* in their Humour, and 'have their Spirits full of *Fire*; and *ſwift* and *ſubtil* 'in their *Motion*. *Others*, not ſo *ſprightly* have a 'Blood more *cold* and *phlegmatic*; but the Courſe of 'their Animal Spirits being *temperately* regulated, they 'are *cautious* in *Deliberation*, *ſtrong* and *conſtant* in '*Reſolution*; and *unſhaken* in their *Enterprizes*. How '*viſible* is this *Difference*! *One* is *airy* and *facetious*; 'the *Other thoughtful* and *judicious*. The *Wit* of *One* 'is *Sharp*; the *Senſe* of the *Other*, *Solid*.

'I remember to have ſeen, during the laſt War in '*Flanders*, in a Town where I had my Winter Quar-'ters, a wonderful Example of this *Recompence*, ob-'ſerv'd by Nature. An old Man, who had been born 'blind, and had always continued ſo, had a natural '*Sagacity*, that was *prodigious* and ſcarce *credible*! A 'Legacy being left him, to the Value of *Fifty Piſtoles*, 'the poor Man, who had never expected to be Ma-'ſter of ſuch a Sum, was under no ſmall *Solicitude* 'how to ſecure his Poſſeſſion of it. He determin'd, 'at laſt, to dig a Hole in the Cellar, and hide it: 'But it happen'd, that a *Dutch* Soldier, who was 'quartered in the Houſe, ſaw him bury the Purſe, 'and went afterwards and ſtole it. The Blind Man 'bethinking himſelf of a Place *more* convenient, re-'turn'd, in an Hour or two, and diſcover'd his Mis-'fortune; for which he contriv'd an ingenious Re-'medy, by *detecting* the *Author* of it, which he judg'd 'to have been the *Dutch* Soldier; but the Difficulty 'was, *How* to *prove* it?

'THEY lay in the ſame Room; and, at Night, 'when they were in Bed, the Blind Man began, un-'der Pretence of Friendſhip and Confidence, to con-'ſult with the Soldier, concerning a Neceſſity which 'he ſaid, he was under, to *hide* a *hundred Piſtoles*, 'To ſay Truth, added he, I have *hid fifty* of them '*to Day*; and would diſpoſe of the *other Fifty* in the 'ſame Place, to Morrow; only I am deſirous to be 'ſatisfy'd, Whether, in Point of *Conſcience*, ſuch a 'Practice is *unlawful*? My Relations being ſo extra-'vagant, that they would *waſte* it all, if they could 'come at it.

'THE *Soldier* ſwallowed the *Bait*, and *argued*, 'like a *Caſuiſt*, to confirm the Intention; expecting, 'now, to get it *all*. He roſe, therefore, betimes, and 'going into the Cellar, reſtor'd the fifty Pieces to the 'Hole, he had taken them from: The Blind Man 'went, afterwards, and recover'd his Money, as he 'expected, by the Succeſs of his Stratagem.'

HERE, the *Major* clos'd his *Speech*; and it was difficult to ſay, which had moſt pleas'd the Hearers, His *Story*, or his *Good-Nature*? *Ned Volatile*, himſelf, tho' his *Vanity* was a *little* ſhock'd, felt an Awe, from the *Vertue*, and *Plain-Dealing* of his Friend; and looking *generouſly*, *out of Countenance*, told the *Major*, with a ſerious Smile, 'That, In Company of the 'Wiſe, none are *Fooliſh*, but the *Witty*.

'YET, to ſhew you, ſaid he, (by this Time, be-'ginning to recover himſelf, That I have *edified* by 'your *Sermon*, I will make an *honourable Amends* to 'the LADIES, by producing the Example of a '*Living Glory* to their SEX, who has alſo been plea-'ſant on a *natural Defect*, but in a manner, much 'more *Generous*. And, ſince nothing will ſatisfie the '*Major*, but my utmoſt Mortification, I will confeſs 'too, that her *Verſes* are a great deal *wittier* than mine 'are. She made them, on a *Boy* that was *Dumb*, but 'of excellent *Quickneſs* of *Parts*. And I ſpeak with 'the more *Pleaſure*, in *Praiſe* of this LADY, becauſe 'I know, I can do nothing, more *acceptable* to the '*Major*, whom I have often heard declaring himſelf, 'One of Her *devoted Admirers*.

I*Sing the Boy, who* gagg'd *and* bound,
Has been, by Nature, robb'd *of* Sound.
Yet has ſhe found a gen'rous Way,
One Loſs, *by* many Gifts, *to pay.*
His Voice, *indeed, ſhe cloſe* confin'd;
But bleſs'd him with a ſpeaking Mind.
And ev'ry Muſcle *of his Face,*
Diſcourſes, *with peculiar Grace.*
The LADIES, *tatling, o'er their* Tea,
Might learn to charm, *by copying* Thee:
If Silence, *thus, can* Man *become,*
All Women Beauties, *ſhou'd be* dumb.
Then, happy Boy, *no more complain,*
Nor think thy Loſs of Speech *a Pain*;
Nature *has us'd Thee, like* good Liquor,
And cork'd *thee, but to make thee* quicker.

THE *Major* embrac'd *Ned Volatile* with a fatherly Pride and Tenderneſs: And there was not One in the Company, who did not think it a *Happineſs*, to be guilty of a *Fault*, which had furniſh'd an Opportunity of *repenting* ſo *gracefully*.

ERRATA:

*** N. B. *In laſt* Monday's *Paper*, *Page* 2. *Col.* 2. *line* 22. *inſtead of* [Determin'd immediately to *leap* out of my Gown, and confeſs himſelf *No Doctor*;] *Read*, Determin'd immediately [to compell him] to *leap* out of my Gown, and confeſs himſelf *No Doctor*.

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